

The Malawi Famine of 2002

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1 Introduction

Between January and April 2002, several hundred Malawians died of starvation and hunger-related diseases. As with all food crises, explanations fall into two clusters: 'trigger factors' (livelihood shocks and response failures), and 'underlying causes' (factors that raise vulnerability to livelihood shocks). Also as is common with most famines, this crisis can be explained as the complex product of a combination of both 'technical' and 'political' issues.

2 What happened?

It is conventional in famine analysis to concentrate on the most extreme outcome – 'excess mortality' – as a measure of its severity. There are no official statistics on hunger-related deaths in Malawi in 2002. However, the figure of 300–500 is widely accepted as a lower estimate (Taifour 2002: 2), while lists of the dead collected by civil society groups suggest that a figure in the range of 1,000–3,000 may be more accurate.¹ Even the lower estimates make this famine the worst in Malawi's recorded history: the Nyasaland famine of 1949 resulted in approximately 200 deaths (Vaughan 1987: 162).

Mortality peaked in February–March 2002, and was concentrated among three typical 'vulnerable groups': the very young, the elderly (members of child-headed and elderly-headed households were especially at risk), and the already ill. Unusually, adult men and women also succumbed to marasmus and death (FEWSNET 2002b). In parts of Malawi the famine was known as 'the swelling', because malnourished adults and children suffered oedema that caused their faces and feet to swell up before they died.

Rationing food consumption is an immediate and universal response of the poor to livelihood shocks. Malawians who are not self-sufficient in good rainfall years already consume less food than they need, because they are market-dependent and rationing consumption makes limited food supplies last longer (Peters 1996). In 2001/02, dietary adaptation went far beyond 'normal' seasonal rationing. Abdominal illnesses and fatal cases of food poisoning followed from consumption of maize cobs and stalks, maize bran mixed with sawdust, boiled mangoes, banana roots

or wild mushrooms. In February, hungry people started consuming 'green' (unripe) maize. This premature harvesting, later estimated at 8 per cent of the maize crop, met immediate consumption needs but undermined future food security. By March, pumpkins were available, but they were stunted because people had consumed the leaves.

By October 2001 people with livestock started selling them to buy food, but the terms of trade fell rapidly: maize prices rose due to excess demand, livestock prices fell due to excess supply. In Mchinji District, goats which sold for Malawi Kwacha 600–1,000 in November fetched MK150–500 in February. Between February 2001 and February 2002 cattle prices fell from MK6,000–15,000 to MK1,500–4,000 (Kamowa 2002). Chickens were bartered for a plate of maize. When rural people could not access food at affordable prices in their communities, many moved to towns or migrated to Zambia, where they survived on casual labour, begging, or gleaning in grinding mills.

Another indicator of the severity of the food crisis is the evidence of social breakdown and a rise in antisocial behaviour. In many communities, social structures for looking after vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and orphans, collapsed. Some parents reportedly abandoned their children or even sold orphans in their care, being unable to feed them (BBC 2002). Sex for food or cash increased, inevitably raising rates of HIV/AIDS transmission. Widespread thefts of food, livestock and household items occurred, including unripe maize from neighbours' fields and gardens. This provoked a violent response: people who were caught stealing were hacked with machetes – many had hands, fingers or ears amputated – or were even killed.

Such behaviour is unprecedented in Malawi – at least since the 1949 famine – and suggests that the food crisis created extraordinary social tensions, accelerating a process of profoundly negative sociocultural change, which started, according to some, with the economic liberalisation and political transition of the 1980s and 1990s. Crudely, liberalisation has been associated with deepening poverty and rising inequality, while the shift from repressive authoritarian rule to multi-party democracy has been associated with a breakdown

of law and order and spiralling levels of crime and violence (Evans 1997; Mataya *et al.* 1998).²

3 Triggers

According to Sen's 'entitlement approach' to famine analysis, famines follow from failures in production-based, trade-based, labour-based and transfer-based entitlements to food (Sen 1981). This framework is useful for analysing the Malawi food crisis of 2001/02, which followed a reduced maize harvest (production failure), import bottlenecks (trade failure), poverty and limited employment opportunities (labour constraints), and late delivery of food aid (transfer failures).

3.1 Food production shock

The immediate trigger for the food crisis was abnormal rainfall – localised flooding and waterlogging of fields – during February and March 2001, which reduced national maize production by 32 per cent, from a record high of 2.5 million metric tons in the 1999/2000 season to 1.7 million metric tons in 2000/01. The Famine Early Warning System (FEWSNET) predicted a maize shortfall of 273,000 metric tons, but since the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation estimated that roots and tubers production (cassava, potatoes) was 'high', FEWSNET (2001) predicted that total food availability would be more than adequate, with a surplus over consumption needs (in maize-equivalent terms) of 437,775 metric tons. Also, the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA) held over 60,000 metric tons in maize stocks at the start of the new consumption year, in April 2001.

Information constraints – information that was plain wrong, or concealed, or ignored – contributed to the food crisis in several ways. Misleading production estimates for the 2000/01 agricultural season resulted in unfounded complacency about the food availability situation, and contributed to slow response by both public and private actors. First, maize production estimates were revised downwards three times during the season, which created a misguided belief, as late as April 2001, that the maize harvest would be adequate for national consumption needs. Second, even after the harvest was in and

Box 1: The role of the media as an 'Early Warning System' in Malawi

In February and March 2002, the international media broadcast sensational reports from Malawi, a country that generally receives negligible attention from the world's media. (Headlines from *BBC News* included: 'Famine stalks Southern Africa', 19 February; 'Malawi declares famine emergency', 27 February; 'Spectre of starvation in Malawi', 6 March.) Media coverage focused on two aspects of the crisis: graphic evidence of malnutrition and hunger, and lurid stories of people being killed or mutilated by their neighbours for stealing food.

'Hunger breeds desperation in Malawi' (*Boston Globe*, 28 April 2002)

It was the most expensive corn James Black had ever eaten. When workers on a neighbouring farm accused him of stealing three cobs in early March, they attacked the tobacco worker. First they bound him, then they beat him bloody and finally, they sliced both his ears with a razor. Before abandoning Black, they stuffed one ear in his pocket. Asked to explain such brutality, Black said simply: "It is the hunger."

Since the 1980s, academics have argued that a 'free and campaigning press' acts as a 'famine early warning system', alerting national governments and international donors to impending food crises and thereby ensuring that resources are mobilised to prevent a potential disaster sliding into a mass mortality tragedy. The case of Malawi in 2002 reveals the limitations of this argument. The media is a *late* indicator of distress, not an early warning. Journalists and television crews arrived in Malawi like spectators at a car crash: to observe the tragedy, not to prevent it.

the 'maize gap' was known, overestimates of roots and tubers production – caused by methodological problems but compounded by Ministry of Agriculture efforts to demonstrate the success of its crop diversification strategy away from white maize – generated expectations that the maize shortfall would be covered by cassava and potatoes. As late as January 2002, the Famine Early Warning System was insisting that 'Malawi has a national food surplus in 2001/02' (FEWSNET 2002b). This false optimism fatally delayed predictions of an emergency. When evidence emerged in late 2001 of rising maize prices and shortages of food in village markets, the government, donors and FEWSNET explained this in terms of Malawians' 'inflexible eating habits' and 'strong consumption preference for maize'. These statements reflect failures of information: in fact, many Malawians migrated from maize-growing to cassava-growing areas in their desperate search for food.

Information about the impending food crisis was available as early as August 2001, when NGOs working at village-level reported abnormal maize price rises and warned of rapidly declining food

security, but the credibility of this information was questioned and the signals were ignored. In October, Save the Children (UK) published a report which revealed alarming indicators of stress in Mchinji District: maize prices had risen by 340 per cent since January and 40 per cent of households were already out of food (Sawdon 2001). In November, Save the Children made a public presentation in Lilongwe, calling for immediate intervention. But government and donors remained sceptical, arguing that according to official statistics there was no food availability problem, and this recommendation was rejected. In December 2001 and February 2002, Save the Children commissioned nutrition surveys in two districts, which found an alarming escalation in global malnutrition rates for Salima, from 9.3 per cent to 19.0 per cent (Taifour 2002). This provided the first 'hard evidence' that donors found credible, and it provoked an immediate, albeit belated, response.

Among civil society organisations, the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) – an umbrella grouping of 45 civil society organisations and

NGOs concerned with 'economic governance' in Malawi – was instrumental since late 2001 in mobilising activist groups, media campaigning and pressuring the government to declare a famine. Religious groups affiliated to MEJN – such as the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace – collected statistics on starvation deaths, which were presented to the government and disseminated to the local and international press. Despite their close contacts with affected communities, the data provided by MEJN and these religious organisations was dismissed. President Muluzi at first denied the crisis, then finally declared a State of Disaster – though not a 'famine' – on 27 February 2002. Moreover, the international media did not react to warnings of impending tragedy until the crisis was full-blown (see Box 1).

So, information about the food shortage was publicised in good time for effective relief interventions to have been launched. However, since this information came not through 'official' sources, but rather through traditional leaders, church groups and other civil society organisations, the government and donors failed to act on these signals until it was too late. An important lesson is that information derived from 'informal' sources such as NGOs should be *validated* rather than dismissed: because they work at community-level, NGOs can act as useful early warning systems.

3.2 Strategic grain reserve mismanagement

The motto of the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA) – '*ADEQUATE RESERVES FOR MALAWI*' – reveals its mandate: to maintain adequate buffer stocks to protect Malawians against fluctuations in food production, availability and prices. Yet during 2001 the NFRA sold all of the Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR), and some months later, people were dying of hunger. How could this have happened?

The NFRA was established as an independent trust in July 1999. Previously the grain reserve was managed by ADMARC, the agricultural marketing parastatal. But the donors argued that the SGR should be run independently, on a cost-recovery basis, and for this reason the NFRA was not capitalised. Instead, the NFRA took a commercial loan and purchased 167,000 metric tons of maize,

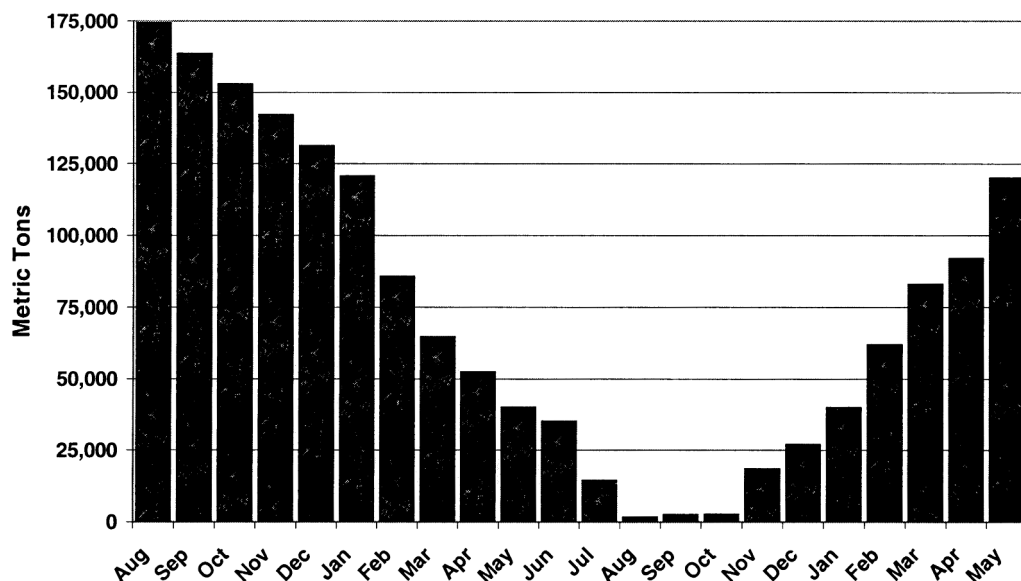
following the bumper harvest of 1999. During 2000, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) advised the NFRA to sell some of the SGR to service its debt, but another bumper harvest depressed maize prices and made it impossible to sell except at heavy losses.

The IMF and World Bank were increasingly concerned that the size of the SGR was 'excessive', that NFRA operations risked distorting the market, and that holding this level of reserve was fiscally unsustainable. By early 2001, the maize in the SGR was almost two years old and badly needed replenishment, while the NFRA remained heavily in debt. The IMF therefore advised the NFRA to export SGR grain (rather than 'dump' it on local markets, which would depress prices further and undermine producer and trader incentives), and to replenish it to a much lower level, to release funds to repay the NFRA loan. Accordingly, 35,000 metric tons of SGR maize was sold to Kenya and Mozambique in April–May 2001. This controversial decision was subsequently blamed as a major contributory factor to the food crisis.

The IMF admits that the policy advice it gave to the government in 2001 was based on 'wrong information' about crop production. 'We strongly advised the government to reduce the level of the grain reserve to between 30,000 and 60,000 tons, on cost-effectiveness grounds, but not to sell it all off.' Sales of SGR stock should have been replenished through local purchases after the 2001 harvest. 'When the decision was taken to export NFRA maize to Kenya and Mozambique, this was the correct decision based on information available at the time. An average harvest was forecast, the maize stock was old, and someone was willing to buy it. The advice would have been correct if the information was correct.'³

As noted above, harvest forecasts were repeatedly revised downwards during the first half of 2001, when most of the grain reserve was sold. The result was a steady rundown of the SGR, from a highpoint of 175,000 metric tons in August 2000 to virtually zero stocks one year later (see Figure 1). Because of lack of local surpluses to purchase and delayed maize imports (shown on the right of Figure 1), Malawi was effectively without any public stocks of food for three months.

Figure 1: Malawi maize stocks and imports, 2000–2002



An unresolved question is what happened to some 60,000 metric tons of SGR maize that was not officially exported in 2001. Anecdotal evidence suggests that local politicians and well-connected businesspeople profited by buying maize cheaply from the SGR early in 2001 and reselling it when the government trebled the price of NFRA maize in November, earning excessive profits. The allegation is that wealthy and influential people who knew about the coming food price hike bought grain from the SGR and withdrew it from the market, creating an artificial shortage that exacerbated the crisis. As seen below, the controversy over this ‘missing maize’ became another reason for the slow response of donors.

3.3 Import bottlenecks

After the final-round crop production estimates in June 2001 projected a maize deficit of 273,000 tons, the Government of Malawi announced that it would cover much of the shortfall by buying and reselling 220,000 tons of maize. In past years, ADMARC interventions in the market served to stabilise food supplies and prices. Many Malawians believe that this was an important positive factor during the drought of 1991/92, when despite a more severe production shock than in 2001, ADMARC retained adequate supplies of cereals in

its markets at affordable prices. In 2001, however, the local purchase programme failed, mainly because ADMARC entered the market late – in July, after private traders had bought up what little maize farmers were willing and able to sell – and found few sellers at its initial purchase offer of MK3/kg, or even when this was raised to MK12/kg.

Accordingly, the Cabinet Committee on the Economy directed the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA) to import maize. In August 2001 the NFRA borrowed US\$33 million at 4 per cent interest from a South African bank, and ordered 150,000 metric tons of white maize from South Africa. Because of delays in the import programme, price rises and adverse exchange rate movements, the NFRA eventually purchased 134,000 tons at an average price of US\$245 per ton. Prices started at US\$220 but rose to US\$265 per ton, as other food deficit countries in the region also turned to South Africa to import maize.

All the maize purchased from South Africa should have been delivered between October and December, at a rate of 50,000 tons per month. If this maize had arrived by December 2001, the crisis might have been averted, but in reality these imports arrived at a rate of only 15,000 tons per month, so that by April 2002 only 94,000 metric

tons had physically arrived in Malawi. The import programme was hampered by competition for scarce regional maize supplies from neighbouring food deficit countries like Zambia and Zimbabwe, and by logistical constraints, as the floods that caused harvest failures also washed away feeder roads, bridges and railway lines, disrupting the movement of food both into and inside Malawi.⁴

In most years, retail maize prices in Malawi are lowest after harvest in June/July, and rise by 50–100 per cent over the next six months, peaking during the lean period between December and February. In 2001, failed harvests and slow imports led to retail (and ADMARC) prices trebling or quadrupling in some places, a case in point being Lizulu market, where prices rose from MK8.80/kg in June to MK25/kg in December. By early 2002, the retail price in some village markets had reached MK40 or more. At that time, the agricultural labour (*ganyu*) wage rate averaged MK20/day – though finding casual employment was increasingly difficult.

In an effort to protect household food security, the government attempted to control the price and distribution of maize, but these efforts had limited success. First, a pan-territorial price of MK17.40/kg was imposed on imported maize purchased (at its landed cost of MK14.50/kg) from the NFRA – a break-even price including handling costs. Unfortunately, this uniform price policy discouraged traders from supplying markets with high transport costs, so the bulk of imported maize remained in Malawi's urban centres, and had limited penetration to the isolated rural communities where hunger was most severe. Next, because of scarce supplies, ADMARC maize sales were rationed to 25 kg, and later 10 kg, per person.

The coexistence of a subsidised public distribution channel alongside a free market in the staple grain created opportunities for rent-seeking that many traders exploited, by buying NFRA maize and reselling it well above the ceiling price. In December 2001, the government banned private traders from purchasing maize from the NFRA, and made ADMARC the sole purchaser. But traders circumvented this ban by hiring local people to buy maize for them, thereby stockpiling grain which they resold for high profits. So the government's efforts to stabilise prices were

undermined, and much of the maize supplied by NFRA was sold on the open market at scarcity prices.

Finally – against the wishes of many donors – the government contracted ADMARC to open hundreds of 'social markets', to ensure that food supplies reached rural communities at affordable prices. (This food security function had been undertaken by ADMARC in the past, before its activities were partially commercialised under structural adjustment conditionalities, and hundreds of 'unprofitable' rural depots were closed (Devereux 1999).) Poor Malawians therefore faced two unsatisfactory options for accessing food: ADMARC markets where prices were relatively low but supplies were erratic and purchases were rationed, or commercial markets where supplies were sometimes better – partly because of diversion of publicly imported maize – but prices were unaffordably high.

3.4 Slow donor response

The Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation called a meeting of Malawi's donor partners in August 2001 to announce that a large food deficit was looming, and to mobilise assistance. But the donors were sceptical, and as a result their intervention came too late to prevent starvation deaths in early 2002. Why?

One possible explanation is that the donors were genuinely unaware of the severity of the impending crisis because they were misled by limited and inaccurate information – exaggerated cassava production estimates, covert Strategic Grain Reserve sales – and their belief that the import programme would cover most of Malawi's food gap. Clearly, if cassava production, SGR stocks and maize imports had been available at their expected levels, the food gap would have been closed.

An alternative explanation is that the donors were slow to intervene in the food crisis because their relations with the Government of Malawi were strained at this critical time. The origins of this deteriorating relationship go back to July 2000, when the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee published a highly critical report on government corruption. Donors also complained

about 'economic mismanagement' and 'bad governance'. In October 2000, for instance, the British High Commissioner publicly rebuked the Government of Malawi and threatened to withhold aid unless corruption was tackled. In November 2001, several bilateral and multilateral donors – including the UK (DFID), the EU and the US (USAID) – suspended their aid programmes, the IMF withheld balance of payments support, while Denmark closed its development programmes and withdrew from Malawi entirely. Other issues of contention at the time included the running down of the SGR, the ruling party's campaign to change the Constitution to allow President Muluzi to run for a third term in 2004,⁵ and political violence by government supporters against its opponents.

When it emerged that the Strategic Grain Reserve was empty and the government was requesting food aid, some donors demanded an explanation – which was never provided – about the missing 60,000 metric tons, reasoning that if it had been sold locally, then the food crisis was artificial and this maize should be released onto the market. USAID claimed that the export of some SGR grain (on IMF advice, to Kenya and Mozambique) tied their hands: 'If a government exports food, the United States has prohibitions on bringing in emergency food in the same year.' Only after the media started reporting starvation deaths early in 2002 did the donors back down and offer food aid unconditionally, which at least helped prevent an even larger tragedy.

Although the donors committed themselves to substantial pledges of emergency assistance for the 2002/03 agricultural year, relations did not improve during or after the food crisis. In May 2002, the IMF announced that it was delaying disbursement of US\$47 million in loans to Malawi, primarily because the Government of Malawi had overshot its fiscal spending target by 7 per cent of GDP.

Lack of good governance has resulted in a misallocation of resources, increased the cost of doing business, created a general distrust in public sector activities, and weakened civil service morale. There is a need to recognise that corruption and weak governance in tandem with bad policies make financial aid ineffective, even counter-productive (IMF 2002).

At the same time, the IMF blamed government policies for creating famine conditions in Malawi earlier in the year: 'Government interventions in the past may have contributed to the current crisis by eroding initiatives for producing food.' The IMF also implied that ADMARC and NFRA activities to minimise famine mortality were unjustified and 'unproductive'.⁶ The IMF, USAID and World Bank argued that the 'agreed' timetable for full commercialisation of ADMARC by end-2002 should continue regardless of the food crisis, whereas government and many NGOs believe that ADMARC's 'social market' function is vital for safeguarding basic food security and should be retained, even if this requires subsidisation.

4 Vulnerability

In 1991/92, a severe drought throughout southern Africa reduced maize production in Malawi to 800,000 metric tons – less than half the 2001 harvest – but produced nothing like as tragic impacts.⁷ Why not? Perhaps because the context of the two emergencies was entirely different. Most crucially, the food crisis of 2001/02 was the culmination of an ongoing process of steadily increasing vulnerability of Malawi's predominantly poor (65 per cent) and rural (85 per cent) population.

Low and declining agricultural productivity is perhaps the fundamental source of chronic poverty and food insecurity in rural Malawi. Soil fertility in Malawi fell during the 1990s, reducing crop yields at the same time as escalating fertiliser prices, shrinking farm sizes, and the spread of HIV/AIDS,⁸ all undermined household efforts to achieve food production self-sufficiency.

Until the early 1990s the Government of Malawi, like most of its neighbours, maintained a complex set of institutions and policies that supported the production and distribution of food staples. Though costly and inefficient, institutions like ADMARC and policies like fertiliser subsidies and maize price stabilisation contributed significantly to household food security. Structural adjustment reforms – including the Fertiliser Subsidy Removal Programme, the collapse of the Smallholder Agricultural Credit Association, and the commercialisation of ADMARC – systematically dismantled these institutions and abolished these

policies. To date, the anticipated benefits of agricultural liberalisation, including the emergence of an efficient and competitive private sector, have not materialised. Given Malawi's extreme poverty, weak transport infrastructure and thin network of traders, it is highly unlikely that the private sector can effectively replace the public institutions that have been undermined in the pursuit of liberalisation, at least in the foreseeable future.

Two sets of vulnerability factors intersected in converting the crop failure of 2001 into the famine of 2002: unsustainable livelihoods and weak institutions. If the old model of heavy state interventionism in food production and distribution was built on 'unsustainable' subsidies and 'inefficient' institutions, it was at least more effective at protecting household food security than the 'blueprint' application of Washington Consensus ideology, which deliberately undermined these pillars of food security and exposed Malawi's poor to the full consequences of production, market and relief failures.

There can be no question of resuscitating Malawi's parastatals and reintroducing untargeted input or consumers subsidies: for one thing, it is extremely difficult to implement subsidies in a liberalised economy with porous borders. Nonetheless, the consequences of state withdrawal from food security provisioning in a context of mass poverty, market failure and lack of social protection were all too predictable, and have now been realised – these policies have delivered chronic vulnerability and the persistent threat of famine. A new development model is needed for Malawi, one which at the very least guarantees basic food security – access to

adequate food at affordable prices – to all Malawians at all times.

5 Conclusion

Superficially, the Malawi famine of 2002 might appear to have all the characteristics of old-style 'drought famines': a crop failure triggered by climatic variability in a rain-fed agricultural system, 'exchange entitlement failures' as food prices spiralled and livestock prices collapsed, weak government institutions, and slow donor response. Yet there are also elements that classify this as a 'new famine', including:

- high levels of HIV-prevalence and a growing threat of what Alex de Waal (in this *Bulletin*) labels 'AIDS-Related National Crises';
- the imposition of economic liberalisation policies that have undermined the institutional capacity of the state to deliver food security to its citizens;
- powerful Western donors engaged in fractious relationships with client governments at critical moments for national food security;
- the 'new neo-Malthusianism' of a growing population characterised by high dependency ratios and confined to low-input, low-output agriculture, with few alternative employment opportunities and a desperate need for structural transformation of the rural economy.

This scenario is not unique to Malawi – it is found also in highland Ethiopia and the Great Lakes region, for instance – but it may be a recipe for a new generation of famines, of which Malawi in 2002 is only the first.

Notes

* This article is based on a report commissioned by ActionAid-Malawi for the Civil Society Agriculture Network (Devereux 2002). It draws on interviews conducted with the Government of Malawi, NGOs, faith-based and rights organisations, donors, academics, and private traders.

1. Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Malawi, *pers. comm.*
2. Two statements made in focus group discussions by elderly Malawians articulate this view succinctly: 'Before, everyone was for each other. Now everyone is for himself, and only God is for everyone' and 'Democracy is anarchy! We have moved from too

little freedom to too much freedom' (Devereux 1999).

3. Quotations come from an interview conducted with the IMF in Malawi, May 2002.
4. Additionally, 'bad luck' problems affected road, rail and sea routes. (1) Truckers who were already engaged in bringing fertilisers and later Christmas goods into Malawi had little spare capacity for maize imports. (2) A train derailment on the South Africa–Zimbabwe border disrupted rail traffic for several weeks, while floods also damaged the railway line along the 'Nacala corridor' from Mozambique. (3) The Mozambican ports of Nacala and Beira faced

- capacity constraints, which delayed shipments of grain destined for Malawi.
5. On 4 July 2002, this proposed constitutional amendment was rejected by the Malawi Parliament.
 6. 'Government interventions in the food and other agricultural markets ultimately led to the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA) and the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) taking heavy recourse to budgetary financing, crowding out more productive spending' (IMF 2002).
 7. See Eldridge, in this *Bulletin*, for an analysis of the 1991/92 drought emergency.
 8. HIV-prevalence in Malawi is estimated at 20 per cent of the national population (National AIDS Commission 2001). By 1999, AIDS had reduced estimated life expectancy at birth from 51 to 37 years – one of the lowest in the world (Haacker 2002: 4). Mortality due to AIDS affects working age adults disproportionately. AIDS has created new categories of 'demographically vulnerable' groups: households lacking adult labour, elderly-headed and child-headed households, street children (Shah *et al.* 2002).

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